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The Wine Spectator California Winemen Oral History Series

Amandus N. Kasimatis

A CAREER IN CALIFORNIA VITICULTURE

With an Introduction by
Maynard A. Amerine

An Interview Conducted by
Ruth Teiser
in 1987

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AMANDUS N. KASIMATIS

1981

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TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Amandus N. Kasimatis

PREFACE i

INTRODUCTION by Maynard A. Amerine v

INTERVIEW HISTORY vii

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY viii

The Education of a Horticulturist 1
Kern County Grapes and Tree Fruits 3
Wine Grape Varieties 6
The Giumarras and the Di Giorgios 9
From Farm Advisor to Viticultural Specialist 10
Brandy and Concentrate 11
Viticulture and Enology at Davis in the 1950s 13
Research and Field Stations 16
Rootstocks, Trellising, and Mechanical Harvesting 18
Eutypa Dieback 22
International Interests 24
Cost Data Sheets 25
Grape Varieties: Changing Interests 26
Pinot Noir, Gamay Beaujolais, and Napa Gamay 30
Soil as a Factor in Wine Quality 32
Growers and the Cooperative Extension 33
Specialists' Programs and Wine Grape Day 35
Work as a Consultant 37
Foundation Plant Material Service 38
Raisins 40
Wine Institute Activities 40
The A. S. E. V. 41
Vineyard Changes, 1948-1987 42

TAPE GUIDE 45

APPENDIX I - Bibliography 46

APPENDIX II - Overseas Activities 50

INDEX 52

PREFACE

The California wine industry oral history series, a project of the Regional Oral History Office, was initiated in 1969 through the action and with the financing of the Wine Advisory Board, a state marketing order organization which ceased operation in 1975. In 1983 it was reinstituted as The Wine Spectator California Winemen Oral History Series with donations from The Wine Spectator Scholarship Foundation. The selection of those to be interviewed is made by a committee consisting of James D. Hart, director of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; John A. De Luca, president of the Wine Institute, the statewide winery organization; Maynard A. Amerine, Emeritus Professor of Viticulture and Enology, University of California, Davis; Jack L. Davies, the 1985 chairman of the board of directors of the Wine Institute; Ruth Teiser, series project director; and Marvin R. Shanken, trustee of The Wine Spectator Scholarship Foundation.

The purpose of the series is to record and preserve information on California grape growing and wine making that has existed only in the memories of wine men. In some cases their recollections go back to the early years of this century, before Prohibition. These recollections are of particular value because the Prohibition period saw the disruption of not only the industry itself but also the orderly recording and preservation of records of its activities. Little has been written about the industry from late in the last century until Repeal. There is a real paucity of information on the Prohibition years (1920-1933), although some commercial wine making did continue under supervision of the Prohibition Department. The material in this series on that period, as well as the discussion of the remarkable development of the wine industry in subsequent years (as yet treated analytically in few writings) will be of aid to historians. Of particular value is the fact that frequently several individuals have discussed the same subjects and events or expressed opinions on the same ideas, each from his own point of view.

Research underlying the interviews has been conducted principally in the University libraries at Berkeley and Davis, the California State Library, and in the library of the Wine Institute, which has made its collection of in many cases unique materials readily available for the purpose.

Three master indices for the entire series are being prepared, one of general subjects, one of wines, one of grapes by variety. These will be available to researchers at the conclusion of the series in the Regional Oral History Office and at the library of the Wine Institute.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons who have contributed significantly to recent California history. The office is headed by Willa K. Baum and is under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, the director of The Bancroft Library.

Ruth Teiser
Project Director
The Wine Spectator California
Winemen Oral History Series

10 September 1984
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

CALIFORNIA WINE INDUSTRY INTERVIEWS

Interviews Completed by 1988

Leon D. Adams, Revitalizing the California Wine Industry 1974

Maynard A. Amerine, The University of California and the State's Wine Industry 1971

Maynard A. Amerine, Wine Bibliographies and Taste Perception Studies 1988

Philo Biane, Wine Making in Southern California and Recollections of Fruit Industries, Inc. 1972

John B. Cella, The Cella Family in the California Wine Industry 1986

Burke H. Critchfield, Carl F. Wente, and Andrew G. Frericks, The California Wine Industry During the Depression 1972

William V. Cruess, A Half Century of Food and Wine Technology 1967

William A. Dieppe, Almaden is My Life 1985

Alfred Fromm, Marketing California Wine and Brandy 1984

Joseph E. Heitz, Creating a Winery in the Napa Valley 1986

Maynard A. Joslyn, A Technologist Views the California Wine Industry 1974

Amandus N. Kasimatis, A Career in California Viticulture 1988

Horace O. Lanza and Harry Baccigaluppi, California Grape Products and Other Wine Enterprises 1971

Louis M. Martini and Louis P. Martini, Wine Making in the Napa Valley 1973

Louis P. Martini, A Family Winery and the California Wine Industry 1984

Otto E. Meyer, California Premium Wines and Brandy 1973

Norbert C. Mirassou and Edmund A. Mirassou, The Evolution of a Santa Clara Valley Winery 1986

Robert Mondavi, Creativity in the Wine Indsutry 1985

Myron S. Nightingale, Making Wine in California, 1944-1987 1988

Harold P. Olmo, Plant Genetics and New Grape Varieties 1976

Antonio Perelli-Minetti, A Life in Wine Making 1975

Louis A. Petri, The Petri Family in the Wine Industry 1971

Jefferson E. Peyser, The Law and the California Wine Industry 1974

Lucius Powers, The Fresno Area and the California Wine Industry 1974

Victor Repetto and Sydney J. Block, Perspectives on California Wines 1976

Edmund A. Rossi, Italian Swiss Colony and the Wine Industry 1971

Arpaxat Setrakian, A. Setrakian, A Leader of the San Joaquin Valley Grape Industry 1977

Elie C. Skofis, California Wine and Brandy Maker 1988

André Tchelistcheff, Grapes, Wine, and Ecology 1983

Brother Timothy, The Christian Brothers as Wine Makers 1974

Ernest A. Wente, Wine Making in the Livermore Valley 1971

Albert J. Winkler, Viticultural Research at UC Davis (1921-1971) 1973

INTRODUCTION by Maynard A. Amerine

The Land Grant Colleges were established by the Morrill Act of 1862. In 1873 the Agricultural Experiment Stations were authorised, primarily to conduct the much-needed experimental work that was necessary in order to improve agricultural practices. To bring the results of these experiments directly to the farmer the Agricultural Extension Service was set up in 1914 in the various states. Its goal was to bring the latest recommendations of the Agricultural Experiment Stations directly to the farmers and to farm-related industries (such as dairy products and food preservation). In this it has been a signal success.

In this interview Kasimatis shows us not only what a significant role the Extension Service has played in the California grape and wine industries, especially since World War II, but also the leading role which he played.

He started as a horticulturist in Kern County in 1948. There he cooperated in experiments on plums and worked with the huge Kern County table and wine grape industry. Two significant aspects of Kasimatis's career become evident: first, his ability to become a friend and cooperator with the fruit and grape growers and, second, his realization that local experimental plots were necessary to test the recommendations of the Agricultural Experiment Station under local conditions. His enthusiastic inquisitiveness appealed to the growers and played a role in his popularity and success.

In 1955 he was offered the position of viticultural specialist, still in the Extension Service, in the Department of Viticulture and Enology at Davis. Here his assignment was state-wide. He worked with the farm advisors in the various counties. He also joined in field studies with members of the Davis staff and with farm advisors in some of the counties. Here he became the source of information on grape growing for the growers of the state, either directly or through the county farm advisors. In this interview Kasimatis mentions dozens of grape growers with whom he conducted experimental trials on pruning, pesticides, fertilizers, rootstocks, virus-free material, weed control, etcetera.

At Davis he worked as the conduit through which the results of research reached the county farm advisors and the growers. His annual meeting with the viticulturally-interested farm advisors from the grape-growing counties was one method of doing this. He was also responsible for the Davis Grape and Wine Grape Days. The cost data publications were collaborative efforts of the farm advisors and Kasimatis. They brought to the growers, particularly to new grape growers, the latest information on costs of production.

Along the way he gives us information about the ups and downs of wine and table grape varieties, and some of the reasons for this. We also learn about the problems of grape growers in the nine or more counties which he has visited and where he has studied specific problems, many of which have been of interest to California growers. Finally there are some perceptive remarks about the Foundation Plant Material Service as it affected the distribution of virus-free grape cuttings to nurseries. His support of this service no doubt helped it become such a success.

This is the record of what a good farm advisor does, particularly one with a research interest, which Kasimatis certainly had.

Maynard A. Amerine

24 August 1988
St. Helena, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY -- Amandus N. Kasimatis

The interview with A. N. Kasimatis was held on two successive days, February 22 and 23, 1987, on the University of California's Davis campus which had been his headquarters from 1955 until his retirement from his unique position as Extension Viticulturist in 1984. He reviewed the transcript the following spring, made a few amplifications requested by the interviewer, and added the record of his work outside the United States which forms Appendix II.

Our thanks to The University of California Press for permission to reproduce as Appendix I Mr. Kasimatis's bibliography which appears in its 1986 book, Bibliography of Publications by The Faculty, Staff and Students of The University of California, 1876-1980, on Grapes, Wines and Related Subjects compiled by Maynard A. Amerine and Herman Phaff.

Educated at UCLA and Davis in horticulture, Mr. Kasimatis served as assistant farm advisor in Kern County for seven years before being given responsibility for advising grape growers throughout California.

Although he had not grown up on a farm, he proved remarkably understanding of farming problems and particularly those of grape growers. His practical advice on subjects as wide-ranging as soil preparation, recommended rootstocks, which grape varieties to plant where, the relationship between crop load and wine quality, plant diseases, and vineyard costs was based upon sound research and advice from his fellow farm advisors and the faculty of the Davis Department of Viticulture and Enology. Annual meetings that he organized brought recent research to growers' attention. His expertise took him to international conferences, and since his retirement he has continued participating in those and consulting with growers on many of the same problems he addressed while Extension Viticulturist.

Ruth Teiser
Interviewer-Editor

12 September 1988
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Amandus Nicholas Kasimatis

Date of birth 10/5/21 Birthplace San Luis Obispo

Father's full name Nicholas Jerome Kasimatis

Occupation Restaurateur Birthplace Kythera, Greece

Mother's full name Frances Catherine Gelig

Occupation Homemaker Birthplace Donnenheim, Germany

Your spouse Rosemary Ruzicka (deceased July 1980)

Your children Phillip Eugene, Elaine Ann, David Conrad
Howard Alan (deceased December 1980) Andrew Nicholas, Paul Stephen

Where did you grow up? San Pedro area, Los Angeles

Present community Davis

Education San Pedro High School, B.S. 1947 University of California,
Davis, M.S. 1957 University of California, Davis

Occupation(s) Farm Advisor, 1948-1955; Extension Viticulturist
1955-1985; Consulting Viticulturist 1985-present.

Areas of expertise all phases of grape production practice

Other interests or activities Photography, fishing

Organizations in which you are active American Society for Enology and
Viticulture; Davis Lutheran Church

The Education of a Horticulturist

[Interview #1: February 22, 1987] ##

Teiser: Where and when were you born?

Kasimatis: I was born in San Luis Obispo on October 5, 1921. I only lived there for a short time, about a year, and my folks moved to the Los Angeles area to San Pedro where I was raised.

Teiser: Did you have any special interest as a youngster that would have led to your career?

Kasimatis: Not really, no. No, I didn't find that until later.

Teiser: Were you a good student?

Kasimatis: Yes. I graduated from High School at San Pedro and then went on to school for one year at Compton Junior College and then to UCLA. I was there for several years and then I signed up with the navy and went into the service.

Teiser: You came into adulthood just at the time when young men didn't know what the world was going to be like.

Kasimatis: Really. Really. Well, I signed up in the navy reserve which meant that I was able to continue school for another year and then we were called up in July of 1943. I was in the service but we were allowed to go back to school and I was sent back to UCLA, except I was in uniform and I lived with other men of my age and position in a fraternity house that they had commandeered. I stayed there all through the summer.

In October, I was selected to go back to midshipman's school at Columbia University. So we went by train across the country and I went to midshipman's school there and was commissioned in February of 1944. Then I went overseas in the navy in the Pacific. I stayed in the navy until June of 1946, when I was released, and then I came up to school here in Davis in the fall of 1946.

Teiser: In all that time, had you done anything connected with horticulture?

Kasimatis: When I was at UCLA I majored in subtropical horticulture there.

This symbol indicates that a tape or segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes, see page 45.

Teiser: So that was when your interest really began?

Kasimatis: Yes. That's when it really began and I worked as a student in the orchards there. That was really the beginnings right there.

Teiser: How did you happen to become interested in it?

Kasimatis: I just had a feeling for plants and I wanted to get into the College of Agriculture. I really had no idea where I was going, though. Of course, at UCLA the only major they offered was in subtropical horticulture, which for me was fine at the time. And I've never regretted that training that I had there. It's been very useful to me.

Teiser: Was there anything about grapes in it?

Kasimatis: No, not really. The focus was on citrus and avocados, primarily citrus.

Teiser: When you came here then in '46, to Davis, what was your intention?

Kasimatis: I enrolled in the horticulture program here. There was no viticulture major as such, and I enrolled in the horticulture program and got my degree in horticulture in June of 1947. But, in the meantime, I had taken all the viticulture courses that were available. After I graduated I stayed on here for another summer and then another semester, so I didn't leave here until February of 1948. I was a graduate student for that one semester there.

Teiser: Whom did you work with here?

Kasimatis: [Albert J.] Winkler was the professor of viticulture then, and he taught the courses that I took in general viticulture and in variety identification/recognition. There weren't very many courses offered. They still had a non-degree program then, and Professor [Harry E.] Jacob taught the non-degree program.

Teiser: Did you work closely with anyone?

Kasimatis: No. I worked in pomology with Dr. [Hudson T.] Hartman primarily. That was on Saturdays and during the week as an assistant.

Teiser: A lab assistant?

Kasimatis: Yes.

Teiser: And you corrected papers?

Kasimatis: Yes.

Teiser: During those years you were still interested in horticulture as a whole?

Kasimatis: Oh, yes, yes. I had a broad interest at that time. In fact, after I graduated and finished up that graduate work, I looked for various jobs in horticulture; I didn't narrow it specifically then.

Kern County Grapes and Tree Fruits

Teiser: How did you happen to go to Kern County?

Kasimatis: I went to Kern County because there was a job opening there as an assistant farm advisor, and the job was in horticulture. At that time there was only one position in horticulture there so that person had to cover both grapes and tree fruits, including citrus; so I had a very appropriate background for the job. But I went there because there was a job opening there.

Teiser: And your duties, then, were what?

Kasimatis: My duties were, as part of Agricultal Extension Services (as it was known then), as an assistant farm advisor, to work with growers of the horticultural crops in Kern County. That meant primarily educational activities as well as some adaptive research.

Teiser: What were the growers growing mainly?

Kasimatis: The main crop there was table grapes, that was the emphasis. Wine grapes were grown but they were sort of incidental. The wine industry in Kern County at that time was really almost a salvage type operation--

Teiser: Di Giorgio?

Kasimatis: Di Giorgio, and Giumarra, and Perelli-Minetti, and just across the line was California Products, Horace Lanza.

Teiser: I've interviewed two Di Giorgio cousins and Antonio Perelli-Minetti and Horace Lanza.* From their point of view, there was an economic factor--a market balance between table grapes and winery "salvage."

Kasimatis: Yes. It was a sweet wine industry then in the San Joaquin Valley so the two fitted together. But the primary crop was table grapes; the early-producing grapes were centered in the Arvin area, and then the later-producing ones were focused around the Delano area.

The packing house culls, mostly poor appearance (small berries, as well as vineyard stripping/unharvested bunches allowed to reach full maturity) were fermented for dessert wines or for the production of high-proof alcohol used for fortify dessert wines to 19-21 percent alcohol.

Raisins were grown to a very limited extent in Shafter and Wasco. Of the deciduous fruits, why, the Japanese plums were the biggest crop and Di Giorgio was heavily involved in those and in that Arvin area. Early growing peaches were just beginning to come in then in Kern County. Apricots had already sort of come and gone and Japanese plums were the focus. The citrus industry was limited to the Edison area of a thousand, twelve hundred acres, so it was fairly small.

Teiser: It was J.A. Di Giorgio who was interested in the plums, wasn't he?

Kasimatis: Yes, yes.

Teiser: Did he work closely with you?

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*Robert Di Giorgio and Joseph A. Di Giorgio, The Di Giorgios, an oral history interview conducted 1983, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1986.

Antonio Perelli-Minetti, A Life in Winemaking, an oral history interview conducted in 1969, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1975.

Horace O. Lanza and Harry Baccigaluppi, California Grape Products and Other Enterprisies, an interview conducted 1969, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1971.

Kasimatis: Yes, he did. I had a strange experience. Of course Di Giorgio had a vast operation near Di Giorgio, California, and then up in the Delano area. They were not only large but they were leaders in the industry. When I first came as a farm advisor, I remember one experience. I was still finding my way around and I had gotten almost lost on Di Giorgio property. The superintendent-Max, whose last name escapes me, came up to me and wanted to know what I was doing and told me politely to get off their property. I always remembered that, because he was followed in the job very shortly thereafter by another man, Joe Lyttle, who was considerably different and was extremely cooperative with the University and with Extension, extremely cooperative So I did quite a bit of work with them and had a very strong relationship.

Teiser: Among the people whom you worked with, was there any difference between large and small farmers? Was either group more receptive to your help?

Kasimatis: Well, of course Kern County doesn't have, or never did have very many small farmers there. They tended to be large. No, I think that, as far as working with people, I don't think there's basically any difference. I think if there were differences, there were differences in the matter of interest and in the matter of being able to adopt new things more quickly.

Teiser: What was a typical sort of project that you worked on with, say, Di Giorgio--any crop?

Kasimatis: One of the first ones I worked on was in plums. They had a problem--particularly on Santa Rosa plums which was their largest variety, that at maturity these plums had very neat holes in them. That's the best way to describe it; they weren't ragged; they weren't the result of any mechanical injury or feeding, but they were actually holes like big dimples. Ed Swift and I (Ed Swift was the Extension entomologist; he was a specialist), we did some trials there and showed that this injury was caused by western flower thrips that were attacking the plums at a very early stage, and we published this in California Agriculture. That proved to be a fairly important thing; it was not a problem that happened every year, but it did result in a fair amount of culling, so all the people in the area were able to benefit from that. It just took a spray of DDT, which was a material very effective and, of course, widely used at that time.

Another project I worked on with Di Giorgio was with water berries, and this is a subject that I pursued in the development of my masters thesis. We didn't solve anything, but I learned quite a bit about this particular problem. They were very cooperative in doing that work. Those are a couple of examples.

Teiser: There are problems which seem different from most other grape-growers' problems because of their size.

Kasimatis: Well, the thing that was different about the Di Giorgio Fruit Corporation then was that they were heavily involved in the New York fruit auction market, so they had a very strong marketing part of their organization.

Wine Grape Varieties

Teiser: Lanza's California Grape Products was mainly in grapes and private label?

Kasimatis: Yes. Wine grapes and yes, they did a lot of bulk shipments and private label.

Teiser: Were they distinctive in any way?

Kasimatis: In my career, they had a somewhat unique place because they had two UC graduates, Bill de Mattei and Uriel Nielsen. Bill has since passed on and Uriel is in Santa Maria. They were both graduates of Davis and they had worked in the enology cellar and they knew Professor [Maynard A.] Amerine quite well. So we had a common bond there and they were most cooperative and most helpful. The interesting part of that story is that in the early to middle sixties they they planted grapes over in the Santa Maria area and were the first growers over there with the wine grapes.

Teiser: Successfully?

Kasimatis: Successfully? Oh, they were the fathers of that industry that enlarged to, I don't know, ten or twelve thousand acres.

Teiser: What varieties were they planting, do you remember?

Kasimatis: Oh, they planted Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon and Riesling and Sylvaner. They marketed their grapes, I think, through Christian Brothers up in Napa Valley.

Teiser: I remember that Mr. Lanza had Nebbiolo.

Kasimatis: Well, he had a very strong interest in varieties and, of course, he and Professors Winkler and Amerine worked very closely together on variety evaluations.

Teiser: Every so often Nebbiolo comes up. I see someone now--

Kasimatis: Yes. Martin Brothers have a label. Well, this is in Paso Robles, I think, where Martin Brothers have it.

Teiser: Were there other unusual varieties down there in the San Joaquin Valley that did well?

Kasimatis: I don't think there was any real strong recognition of varieties down there at all. I think the Di Giorgio winery and the Giumarra winery were tied in with their table grape operations, so varieties were not really important. But Antonio Perelli-Minetti an Lanza had a wide interest in varieties.

Teiser: Perelli-Minetti developed a variety, didn't he?

Kasimatis: Yes, he did. A colored variety and as far as I know, no one else ever planted it. Yes, he had patented it too.

Teiser: What was its name?

Kasimatis: Perelli 101, introduced in 1964. Black in color, high in sugar and producing wine of intense red color.

He used to go to the pomace pile and get seeds and plant them out and select seedlings, and that's what he did. He had varieties: Cataratto, Inzolia, and exotic things that nobody else had ever heard of, let alone planted, because the standard wine varieties down there were Carignane, Palomino, Mission.

Teiser: Still Missions?

Kasimatis: Oh, yes.

Teiser: Are there any Missions left?

Kasimatis: In the state? Oh, yes. They're scattered around, sure. There's some up in Amador County that come to mind. In the northern part of the San Joaquin Valley there are some.

Teiser: I remember the Jesuit winery, Novitiate, in Los Gatos was using some Mission in Angelica. They've gone out of businesss since.

Kasimatis: Well, the Mission variety has produced some excellent Angelicas now. Really, I think, growers grew it because it was a high sugar, high producing variety.

Teiser: Is there anything to be said today in its favor?

Kasimatis: Harbor Winery and a few others that produce an Angelica type now use it. (They don't call it Angelica, they have another name, Mission del Sol.) And it went into ports in general, but as far as I know, the market for that is so limited. What interest

Kasimatis: there is is in the finer ports that are made by people like Ficklin and Quady.

Ficklin uses Tinta Cao and Tinta Madiera and Souzao. (Tinta Madiera is not really known--it's not grown in Portugal, according to what I've been told now.) In fact, Dave [David] Ficklin started on the basis of those port varieties introduced by Dr. Olmo and I think they settled primarily on Tinta Madiera and Tinta Cao.

Another very prominent grower in Kern County was John J. Kovacevich in Arvin. His father had at one time a winery in the Arvin area, and that was closed by the time I got there. He was primarily a producer of early table grapes and plums, and then later on peaches, and then he did some general farming, too. He worked very closely with the University and he was a very resourceful man that was on the cutting edge of things; he was very innovative. For many years he was really the spokesman for table grape production in the area.

Teiser: What varieties?

Kasimatis: Thompson Seedless was the primary one, but then Cardinal; he was one of the first to plant Cardinal in the area, and Ribier, and Red Malaga.

There was one other personality that I think is worthy of mention. His name is Grant Merrill. I don't know whether you're familiar with the story of Grant Merrill, but Grant Merrill was a farm advisor in Tehama County and became very interested in breeding peach varieties. His interest became great enough that he left the Extension service and became a peach breeder and grower.

He was one of the first of the breeders along with Anderson to release the new varieties in the late forties. He had an orchard down at Weed Patch, which is near Arvin, where he had some of his new varieties, and I had a chance to meet him and work with him. He was a very interesting and stimulating type of fellow that had a long history in Agricultural Extension and had made the break and gotten into this peach breeding field.

He introduced some very successful varieties, some of which have remained and others have sort of been lost by the way, but he was a pioneer in his time. He had this orchard, as I say, in Weed Patch, and he was located there because it was a hot area and it produced early maturing peaches.

The Giumarras and The Di Giorgios

Kasimatis: We talked about Antonio Perelli-Minetti, you're familiar with that story. The other people that were important then were the Giumarra brothers, who were really just beginning to emerge at the time I was there. They had started with virtually nothing there. They had come from the Los Angeles produce market and had gotten into the production part. They were hard working, aggressive people that built a tremendous agricultural enterprise, primarily in shipping, grapes and potatoes, and they built a winery that has subsequently changed into a table winery in part. They were a big factor and still are a very big factor in Kern County and particularly in the table grape part.

Teiser: Did I read somewhere recently that they were the largest packers of fresh grapes in the country?

Kasimatis: Yes.

Teiser: But a small factor in the wine business?

Kasimatis: Yes, yes. I'd say small.

They became very much in the limelight in the early mid-sixties in connection with the labor strike, because, you know, they were one of the initial targets in the strike against table grape producers. In fact, the original boycott by the Chavez union was against Giumarra grapes, but the Giumarra people did not take that very readily. So they began shipping their table grapes under different labels not readily recognized as Giumarra production. In my understanding, out of that came the table grape boycott against all table grapes.

Teiser: Was that when they turned further to wine?

Kasimatis: No. I think their interest in wine changed when the interest in table wines changed.

Teiser: Have things changed in Kern County? I understand that enforcement of acreage limitations made it impossible for Di Giorgio to continue farming because of the difficulty of bringing water in from other than federal sources.

Kasimatis: Well, when they got Central Valley water in the Delano area they signed this agreement for ten years longer, and they kept their part of bargain. That broke up the property there which was, I think, about four thousand acres in Delano.

Teiser: But they would have had to break it up anyway.

Kasimatis: Oh, yes. But other people apparently didn't do it so willingly; they fought it and prolonged the whole process.

Teiser: Robert DiGiorgio's point, I think, was that that land couldn't be economically farmed in small pieces.

Kasimatis: Well, it was sold in units, though. The land was sold with the grapes on it, and so it went to different entities.

Teiser: But is it farmed now in big acreages?

Kasimatis: I honestly don't know what's happened to the property now. I know that some of the people that bought that, and some of them were not agricultural people, thought that they were investing in gold mines that turned out these top table grapes, and it didn't necessarily turn out that way. Just because the Di Giorgio people were very successful didn't mean that anybody could come along and recreate that. I think that whole property went downhill very fast after Di Giorgios left. That was the beginning of the breakup of the Di Giorgio interest and influence. The big change came when Robert came into presidency and followed J.S.

Teiser: Yes, J.S. had reluctantly given up farming, and Robert wanted to turn it into a diversified organization.

Kasimatis: I think his viewpoint was looking at it from perhaps a more realistic standpoint. That is, those dollars could be better invested in other activities. I think J.S. still carried on the agricultural tradition. They took a substantial bath down in the Borrego Valley. Ultimately, though, I think they've done very well with the land, but in table grapes it was a bust. But that decision was made by Joseph Di Giorgio; he's the one that went into Borrego.

From Farm Advisor to Viticultural Specialist

Teiser: Did you then go from assistant to chief farm advisor there?

Kasimatis: No. They had a change in titling at that time. When I went in, the only farm advisors were what are now called county directors, the administrative person in each county. So we had one farm advisor and the rest of us were assistants. There was a change that was made in the Berkeley office and all of us became farm advisors without any change in responsibilities. The person who had the sole title farm advisor became county director. They developed a series of titles: they had a county

Kasimatis: director, a regional director, and then assistant director and state director. I got a change in title but no change in pay and no change in responsibilities.

Teiser: What was your title then?

Kasimatis: Farm advisor. We had farm advisors and home advisors. The program in Extension was threefold: in agriculture, in what they called home economics, and in 4-H, the youth group. So we had farm advisors and home advisors and they could have been in any one of those three areas.

Teiser: Why did you leave, then, to come to Davis?

Kasimatis: When I was a farm advisor down there I was offered a job first as a specialist, to be headquartered in Davis working on prunes and strawberries. There was an opening at the time and I declined that for various reasons; those weren't crops I was greatly interested in, was the primary reason. Later on, in 1955, they offered me the job as viticulture specialist and that was one I just couldn't resist, so I came up here in October 1955.

I was the second specialist in viticulture. The first one was Hilton B. Richardson; he was appointed as viticulturist in 1949. He had been a farm advisor in Riverside County. He was the first one in the state; there had never been a specialist in viticulture in Extention before that time. Then he became interested in post-harvest physiology activities and went in that direction. I came up and took over the grape production work in raisins, and table, and in wine grapes on a state-wide basis.

Brandy and Concentrate

Teiser: Are there special considerations about grapes for high proof or beverage brandy?

Kasimatis: That's somewhat controversial. I remember Dr. James Guymon did some work on different varieties and the influence of the variety on brandy quality. However, he published a paper with Andy [Andrew K.] Quady and showed that Thompson Seedless was as good as any of them. There have been some differences of opinion about which is the best variety for brandy production, but I think for the style of brandies that are produced in

Kasimatis: California--that is, under continuous distillation--the variety per se is not very critical at all. More important would be the condition of the fruit and the manner in which the brandy is made.

Teiser: The people using pot stills think variety is important.

Kasimatis: Sure, sure. I think in those operations where they're looking for more distinct flavors I'm sure that that's true. But that's such a small part of our industry, and really only fairly recent.

Teiser: What about concentrates?

Kasimatis: I think that's rather interesting because--

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Kasimatis: The use of concentrate is expanding. In fact, I just heard figures Saturday of an estimate between eleven and thirteen percent of the 1986 crush went into non-alcoholic uses. Big users of concentrates now are people who are making fruit drinks. It's been used in the industry for sweetening and for coloring, but now here is an additional use: it's going into coolers and it's going into non-alcoholic drinks such as Slice, that's made by Pepsi Cola. Apparently--I guess you heard yesterday* too--about the two levels of quality, the higher level of quality that's going into fruit drinks as compared to coolers. But as far as I know, up to now it's been focused on coloring varieties and those going into white, mainly Thompson Seedless right along, and I guess some Chenin blanc, and some French Colombard.

Teiser: They can make concentrate out of anything?

Kasimatis: Oh, surely, surely. There has been discussion for a number of years about the economics of making concentrate and then diluting that and then fermenting at different times of the year so that this would be a way of stretching out [winemaking] facilities and equipment beyond that peak harvest season. Potentially that can be done, but I don't know what the economics of that are now because, of course, it takes a lot of energy to remove that water. I think that's something that there is interest in and somebody may do some work on it now and see how that does work out.

Teiser: Don't we ship a certain amount of concertrate to places like Canada and England?

*At Wine Grape Day.

Kasimatis: I'm sure we do.

Teiser: And I think some goes into home winemaking, doesn't it?

Kasimatis: Yes. I don't know how much concentrates are used for that purpose. I would say up until very recent years making concentrates was sort of important but small and specialized; I think there's only about a dozen wineries in California that are involved in the making of concentrates.

Teiser: What about grape syrup? I remember Dr. Cruess worked on lot of by-products or alternate uses of grapes. One was grape syrup for bakers. Is that still made?

Kasimatis: Not to my knowledge. I think he actually did some work on raisin syrup, too. Those things never caught hold, to my knowledge. He did a lot of work on grape uses.

Teiser: I suppose any of the things that he tried could be tried again.

Kasimatis: But now they're not important uses at all.

Viticulture and Enology at Davis in The 1950s

Teiser: Back to Davis, then. I suppose you were pleased to return here--

Kasimatis: Yes, yes, I was. I left in March of '48 to go down to Kern County and came back in October 1955, and Davis had grown from thirty-five hundred to five thousand then, so it really hadn't changed a bit. In fact, the first subdivision in Davis had started in Oeste Manor. But Davis was unique in that it lost population during the war; you know, most cities grew but Davis didn't, it actually lost. So when we came back in 1955 it was still small. It really bagan to grow in the early sixties following the general campus policy, as contrasted to just agriculture.

I guess the first big decision was to eliminate the non-degree program, which was the program that started Davis. In terms of numbers of students, that was the backbone for a good many years. When I was a student here we still had non-degree students. In fact, there were some classes where either or both could attend. But they finally phased that out, and that was the end of an important era for the Davis campus. Then we saw the introduction of many other majors that were not possible before on this campus.

Teiser: And the Department of Enology was reorganized then too, wasn't it?

Kasimatis: No. The big switch in the department was when Professor Winkler took over in 1937, when it essentially moved from Berkeley to Davis.

Teiser: Dr. Cruess stayed in Berkeley--

Kasimatis: But you see, that was all a part of Food Products. It was Division of Viticulture and it moved to Davis with Winkler. It didn't become the Department of Viticulture and Enology, I think, until when Amerine was chairman,* in '57. But there weren't any really basic changes within this department. In the meantime, of course, Food Products had gone into Food Science and they had a big development over here on the campus.

Teiser: When was this building built that we're in now, Wickson Hall?

Kasimatis: Nineteen fifty-seven. Before that Viticulture didn't have a building. When I was a student, Professor Winkler had an office in the Animal Science building, Professor Olmo had an office in the Horticulture building, and Amerine was over here in the Enology building. Then when I came back in 1955, the Viticulture part was in a three-story shingle building south of the library that was originally the Chemistry building on this campus. So the department was in there, the viticulturists were in there, and enologists were scattered. Some were here, Berg was in Food Science. The only time we all saw each other was at a staff meeting. We really didn't come together until this building.

Teiser: It must have been a great relief to get you all under one roof.

Kasimatis: Yes, really [laughs].

Teiser: You then came as the Extension viticulturist, and you were one of a kind in the state, I gather.

Kasimatis: That's right.

Teiser: Where did you fit in on this campus?

Kasimatis: Well, really, the focus of my activities was with the farm advisors in the counties, not on the campus, so I had no teaching

*For details of the move, completed in 1950, see Maynard A. Amerine, The University of California and the State's Wine Industry, an oral history interview conducted 1969 and 1971, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. 1971.

Kasimatis: responsibilities. I did most of my work with farm advisors out in the counties.

Teiser: Did you have an office?

Kasimatis: Oh, sure.

Teiser: Where?

Kasimatis: Well, originally in what was the Viticulture building, the old Chemistry building. Then of course I moved over here. I was in Wickson Hall from then on.

Teiser: So you were a liaison between what was going on in the University and what was going on in the field?

Kasimatis: That's right. Yes, exactly.

Teiser: How did you know what was going on in the University?

Kasimatis: [laughs] Well, of course, I think we should narrow that down; it was really more in those departments in which there was an interest in grapes. But this was largely personal contact. For instance, I would travel with and did research trials with Lloyd Lider and Bob [Robert J.] Weaver. Anyway, we were just down the hall from each other.

Teiser: Why would they be traveling?

Kasimatis: At that time, the activities in Viticulture were somewhat different. The people in research did a fair amount of their research out in county locations. There were no budget constraints on travel at that time so that people like Professors Winkler and Lider, and [James A.] Cook, and Weaver, and so on, they traveled and not only did research in the counties but they were on call to help with problems, identify problems, or to speak in meetings. That gradually all changed. Budget, for one thing changed; they didn't have funds to do that kind of traveling. And also the emphasis on promotion shifted away from applied activities to more scholarly efforts, so little has been done now compared to what was done before.

Teiser: They switched from going out and about to staying home and doing something more scholarly?

Kasimatis: Yes. But you see at one time, as an example, the Extension publications were all authored, and I wouldn't limit that to viticulture, by people in research departments. They just don't do that now, or do it very incidentally because, from a realistic standpoint, there's minor recognition for career advancement given for that kind of work, which is considered

Kasimatis: service activity. So the emphasis became one of publishing in peer review journals. As a result of that, the people in Cooperative Extention, as it's called now, the specialists and the farm advisors, began doing more and more applied research oriented to specific problems in the different areas.

Teiser: Then did it work this way: that someone here would have a theory about trellising, for example, and you, then, would take it out into the field and try it?

Research and Field Stations

Kasimatis: Not quite. [laughs] Not quite.

Researcher who have ideas don't distribute those freely. They test them themselves. They might test them here at Davis or test them at a University station, and once they publish that they would cooperate if anyone else wanted to try those, perhaps under different conditions.

Teiser: They would try them under test plot conditions, and anyone else could take them into practical use, is that it?

Kasimatis: Yes, either into practical use or for further testing. Because, for instance, if the testing were done here only at Davis, then the question might be, "Well, how would that work in Kern County, for instance, where soil conditions and climatic conditions are different?" And then, alternatively, I would work in a county with one of the researchers and with the farm advisors so we'd actually do the testing there.

Teiser: I see, because you had several levels to work with--

Kasimatis: Yes, yes. The farm advisors varied in their ability and interest in doing this type of research. Some were very keen on it and others didn't get all that involved. They varied quite a bit and, of course, in the University system they have a lot of freedom to pursue their own interest. Some would do more than others in that area.

Teiser: You mentioned university field stations. There's one in Davis, there's one in Oakville...

Kasimatis: The University has a system of field stations. Examples would be Kearny and Five Points and Hopland. These are operated by an office of field stations which comes under the Vice President of Agricultural Sciences. But Oakville is different. Oakville is a department [of Viticulture and Enology] facility. The use

Kasimatis: and support for that comes out of the department, so it's somewhat unique. The field stations are available to researchers in agriculture throughout the University system. They have to write a project and secure approval from a peer field station committee. But that isn't true of Oakville; that's strictly a departmental facility, supported by departmental funds.

Oakville came out of interest by Professor Olmo, initially, to have facilities over in the Napa Valley for testing of varieties. The department was able to purchase the twenty acres of land of the Stelling Estate, and the first vines were planted in 1948. And then that was expanded in 1956, by the addition of another twenty acres that was owned by the USDA. It was a USDA field station for grapes and it operated after the turn of the century to the early twenties.

Teiser: I wondered what became of that.

Kasimatis: It just closed down and sat there, and then legislation was passed to allow the University use of that property solely for grapes. That's part of the Oakville station now. There's two separate properties within a couple miles of each other. The one that the University purchased is on Dwyer Lane, and the USDA property is off Oakville Grade. That has a house on it, the other doesn't have a house.

Teiser: Have you done work at all of those stations?

Kasimatis: Yes. I've done work at Oakville and in Kearny and at Hopland on grapes.

Teiser: There are others?

Kasimatis: Well, as I say, there's Five Points and there's a Meloland Sierra Station and there's a Sierra Foothill station. There is a whole string of them, but as far as grapes are concerned, really Kearny is the only one of any great interest. We did some limited work at Hopland but that didn't persist, largely because the researchers in the department didn't feel compelled to spend all that time driving up to Hopland, so that kind of fizzled out.

Teiser: You continued graduate work after you came here, too--

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Kasimatis: In 1956 I took sabbatical leave and then finished up my master's degree in horticulture, and I received that in June of 1957. I did the work on water berry under Professor Nelson.

Teiser: What are the practical implications of that work?

Kasimatis: Well, I became interested in that problem because it was a major concern of the table grape producers of Thompson Seedless in Kern County, and I don't think anybody else had ever researched that before.

I was told that it was a result of over-cropping. The work that I did showed that it could manifest itself independent of cropping level, and it was a physiological problem related to blockage of vessels in the pedicel. It turns out that this problem is probably the same, or related to a problem that 's found in France and Germany and Italy that's called dry-stem.

There's been considerable research in those countries on this problem along the lines of calcium nutrition, but there's nothing definitive that's come out of it though. There is some relationship there, but it seems to be not a direct one. So the cause of it still remains unsolved now.

Rootstocks, Trellising, and Mechanical Harvesting

Teiser: I see you've done a great deal of work on rootstocks over the years, and published a good deal--*

Kasimatis: Well, rootstocks are of principal concern in California, because we have soil pests that are difficult to control. We have done best by learning to live with them with rootstocks tolerant to these pests. However, it takes considerable testing to find out which are better. That process is a continuing one as exemplified now by the recognition of a more virulent strain of Phyloxera, so there's need for even more testing now. It's a long range type of project.

Teiser: Imagine, after all these years, identifying a new strain.

Kasimatis: It's something that's new to California. It apparently is old hat in France and Germany.

Teiser: This strain?

Kasimatis: The recognition of different strains of Phylloxera.

Teiser: Have you worked at all on that new problem?

*See Appendix I, Bibliography.

Kasimatis: No. That's new enough and discovered about the time I was getting ready to retire. Although I'm still very much involved in it now in my consulting activities.

Teiser: Of your other research projects, what were the principal things you worked on?

Kasimatis: Trellising was a big effort that I worked on, primarily with Doctors Lider and then later Kliewer, and we did work on Thompson Seedless, on different things down in Kearny. At the same time, we did work on pruning levels, on Thompsons and Chardonnay and Pinot Noir at Oakville. Then we did trellising, and spacing, and rootstock trials there at Oakville.

Those activities we started in the middle sixties, and then I spent a sabatical leave in 1976 with Professor Nelson J. Shaulis back at Geneva. That was a very stimulating six months with him, because he was the real pioneer that developed the breakthrough on understanding trellis responses with the development of the Geneva double curtain system.

Teiser: Was much of this impelled by work in mechanized harvesting?

Kasimatis: Well, that was part of it. Up until that time, the trellises had more or less evolved. In the North Coast, the vines there were originally planted without wires, just on the stake, and they were gradually beginning the use of wires with cane pruning in the Napa Valley, particularly on the small-clustered wine varieties, but there had never been any research. The first really developed trellises were those by table grape growers in Tulare County back in the twenties. And there were certain things evolved through the industry, but had not been the subject of any intensive reseach.

Then the work in New York with the Geneva double curtain came directly out of work with full mechanical harvesting, and Professor Winkler, when he was involved with mechanical harvesting, had worked on some trellises, too. Those didn't particularly take hold, but the Geneva double curtain and the concepts that were involved in that have been a tremendous influence on the research in California since that time.

The net effect of mechanical harvesting was that we needed to trellis and train our grapes at a higher level. The trellises themselves were not very elaborate because the machines couldn't accommodate them, so they were rather simple. So the net effect of mechanical harvesting was not a great one on trellising except that it raised the vines up, and also it had a major impact on vineyard layouts so that there were no obstructions in the rows to impede the harvester.

Pruning Thompson Seedless in a trellis trial at UCD, 1980

Examining old Emperor vines with Fresno County Farm Advisor, Curtis Lynn (Lynn pictured at left). 1960

Teiser: Did it change the spacing?

Kasimatis: No, it didn't change the spacing at all. But we used to put irrigation structures or telephone poles right down in line with the grape rows, and that was no longer tolerable with the machines there. And we had to provide for more room for the machines to turn in the vineyard. But other than that, it didn't change the spacing at all. The commercial machines that we ended up with did not have a big impact on the trellising per se.

Now the focal point of trellising is in canopy management as related to disease control and to wine quality, and those were the things that we were just getting into when I retired.

Teiser: So far as disease control is concerned, is the factor moisture, or retention of moisture?

Kasimatis: What we found was that by opening up the vines, by removing the leaves around the clusters, that we apparently created an environment less favorable for the development of Botrytis. And it facilitated coverage by any sprays that were put on. Concurrently, research in other countries has shown the importance of light environment on fruit quality. This has come along at the same time, so that there are several supporting reasons now for opening up these canopies to greater light interception and getting the benefits in several directions.

Teiser: In southern Italy it seems to me they use canopy management for protection against sun.

Kasimatis: Yes, and the main feature of early table grape trellises in the San Joaquin Valley was to keep the fruit from getting exposed. The enology interest, though, is that we don't want fruit that's buried in the canopy; we do want not direct exposure but some level of exposure now.

Teiser: What about for raisins?

Kasimatis: As far as I know, exposure is not really a factor there at all, except that if we had an early hot spell those that are directly exposed might have some trouble. But it's not a factor as far as raisin quality is concerned. In fact, right now there's considerable controversy in the industry, because in the San Joaquin Valley some of the major wineries are adamant about their fruit not being exposed, that is, not showing any degree of ambering. They actually penalize growers for producing that, so this is a counter-trend now. Other wineries don't have the same concern, but some major wineries have particular concerns.

They think of ambering as a symptom of stress, and they look at it in a negative way. It's not really clear what their

Kasimatis: concern is except that fruit that is ambered will tend to make the wines more colored, and that's looked at differently by different wineries. Some think of color in a white wine as being positive, as I would. If you look carefully you'll notice that some have very little color in their white wines, and that's just a matter of winery preference now. I think aesthetically the golden colors are quite attractive.

Teiser: In the hills near Rome grapes are trellised very high, and the human harvesters are carried on low-bed trucks under them and harvest as they move. I should think that's a reasonable system if you have--

Kasimatis: Well, it's a system--we would call it an arbor here--widely used in Italy and in South America, and we in California have only used it for table grapes, and particularly for one variety, the Almeria variety, which has declined substantially in interest in California now. It can be a very productive system. However, it's expensive from the standpoint of the cost and maintenance of that trellis, and, of course, it's not very handy for the harvest and pruning operations. In Argentina, for instance, which I visited, the workers there pick from a little ladder, and they accept that. But I don't think it would work here at all.

Teiser: They just pick it up and move it?

Kasimatis: Yes. A cabrito they call it. It's a very small ladder. In Chile it's the same way, they grow a lot of their table grapes on overhead arbors. But these trellises are very expensive to construct and maintain. The production can be quite high off of them, but we just haven't gone that direction here in California at all; I think labor is a major concern. The only reason the Almeria variety was grown that way was because that's the way it's grown in Spain, and it's a variety that has a pollination problem; so it was desirable to get it up higher to facilitate the pollination.

Teiser: You say that interest in the Almeria grape has declined here; why is that?

Kasimatis: Well, it's been supplanted by a California variety called Calmeria which doesn't have the same pollination problem. It's a variety of only limited interest because it's a late maturing one, and it stores well for several months.

Teiser: It's a table grape?

Kasimatis: Table grape, yes. But it was never a major variety.

Teiser: It isn't seedless?

Kasimatis: It isn't seedless, no.

Teiser: The seedless varieties are the ones that are gaining market share aren't they?

Kasimatis: Oh, yes, undoubtedly, yes. The best example of that would be the Flame Seedless that is so popular now.

Eutypa Dieback

Teiser: Among your other major research projects, then--

Kasimatis: One that I think quite highly of is the work that I did with Bill [William J.] Moller on the recognition and identification of the disease that we named the Eutypa dieback. This disease was first seen by me in the early sixties in Merced County, and when I tried to get some help from various people on the identification on this, there were no answers here, particularly in pathology. It began showing up with greater frequency, in my experience, in the late sixties, early seventies.

About that time Bill Moller came on the scene. Bill Moller was Extension plant pathologist. In Australia they had experienced these same symptoms that we were seeing here, so the first step was the recognition that this was similar. They called the disease dying-vine, and they had no paritcular answer on it. In fact, Bill Moller had worked on that, but they had not had any success over there.

In Australia they identified the Eutypa armeniacae organism in grapes. With Bill Moller we began examining these "dead arms" and spurs, and we consistently found only the one organism in this material. So we then took some healthy vines here on campus and inoculated them with the spores of this organism and reproduced the symptoms and recovered the organism and showed that this was a causal agent for this.

Then it seemed like this disease was everywhere. It's not really clear, because there are no records of severity, but the disease does tend to cycle somewhat. It's been an important disease in the northern half of the state. Dropping off somewhere around Madera south, it's of much lesser importance.

We were also able to show (this is through research) that by applying of fungicide on the fresh pruning wounds, we could protect these wounds because this was the entry point for the

Kasimatis: spores to germinate. [As a result] it is a standard practice in the industry now to protect the vines from infection by painting the wounds.

It's a difficult disease because it takes several years from the time of infection before you see any symptoms, so it's and insidious thing. It sneaks up on growers; the early development in a vineyard is almost obscure because the symptoms show early in the spring as weak and dwarfed shoots, chlorotic shoots, but these are soon covered over by adjacent healthy growth. It's only parts of the vines that are affected, and it becomes progressively worse. But it takes considerable time, so that growers say it happened overnight, but I think, in fact, it had been there for a number of years, but unrecognized because they weren't looking at the optimum time, in the early spring, to find this.

In questioning growers and talking to other people, [we learned] the disease has been in California since the late forties. It was identified as zinc deficiency, and scurf; it had all kinds of names, but without the basis of any research, so it was an unknown thing. It was called something else and sort of dismissed because it apparently went away, at least the symptom appearance went away.

Also, we changed varieties, and there is a difference in varietal susceptibilty to Eutypa dieback. Chenin blanc is an example as extremely sensitive to it, and Grenache. Most of the Grenache now is grown in the southern part of the state, so it doesn't effect that much acreage but Chenin blanc is grown, of course, very widely all over. So now Chenin blanc is perhaps the most important variety that's affected. It's quite destructive.

As a result of our work, we were instrumental in straightening out a disease problem they had in New York. According to the literature back in 1914, D. Reddick and others had described a disease in New York they called "dead arm," which they ascribed to the fungus Phomopsis viticola. They described a disease caused by a Phomopsis viticola and also the one caused by Eutypa armeniacae as one disease, because they were unable to make the isolations of the other organism. Our work showed that in fact there were two diseases in New York. The death of vine parts in New York was ascribed to winter injury; this was the big factor there. Well, of course, the cold temperatures just finished off the diseased tissue.

Then, at this time, Dr. Maurice Carter in Australia, who had initially described this disease on apricots and had done some work on grapes, showed this to be found in Greece. And then subsequently it was recognized in South Africa, and in

Kasimatis: France, in Switzerland, and so on. So, it's a disease of world-wide importance. We were, as I say, in the the beginnings of that and did the work to identify the causal agent for that disease as Eutypa armeniacae.

International Interests

Teiser: Much of your work then has really international implications doesn't it.

Kasimatis: Well, sometimes. But it's interesting; in viticulture and enology throughout the world, as you travel you find out that it's sort of an unorganized but distinct club almost, and interests are so common in problems like Botrytis, and Oidium, and Eutypa, and so on.

Teiser: What countries have you traveled in mainly?

Kasimatis: Oh, viticulturally I've been in Australia several times. I've been in Chile and Argentina, South Africa, France and Germany and Switzerland, Mexico, Canada, and in the United States.*

Teiser: I should have asked you what ones you haven't been to.

Kasimatis: Well, Italy, Spain, and Portugal but you never see it all. [laughs]

Teiser: Do people ask you questions about how to do this and how you do that in California?

Kasimatis: Oh, sure. Oh, yes.

Teiser: All of you here, I think, have carried the word about University of California and Davis.

Kasimatis: Well, Davis has been recognized. [laughs]

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*See Appendix II: Overseas Activities

Cost Data Sheets

Teiser: I stopped in the middle of asking you about your other major research projects.

Kasimatis: This is not exactly research, but one interest that I developed in the late fifties was the series of cost data sheets* that hadn't been done before in grapes. We began with working with farm advisors in the North Coast counties. We put together a series of publications with typical costs of establishing vineyards and producing grapes so we had them on raisin grapes, and table grapes, and wine grapes in the San Joaquin Valley, and, of course, wine grapes in the north coast. We did this with farm advisors and with a farm management economist, Burt Burlingame. We revised these every two years, so we did this for a good many years.

They really came into focus there in the early seventies when a lot of people became interested in planting grapes, and those were very widely used by growers and lending institutions and so on. We always tried to offer those as sample costs with the idea of encouraging growers to keep their own records, but people often used them because they were complete, and it gave them a good idea of numbers. That, I think, was a very successful effort; it took quite a bit of activity to do that.

Teiser: It seems to me that Arpad Haraszthy had published in the nineteenth century a study of what it costs to plant** and--

Kasimatis: I wasn't aware of that. There were studies before ours that I'm aware of, Extension studies, but they were usually on a county basis, for Fresno County, or Kern County. What we attempted to do was to draw data together on a regional base, where there was a lot of similarity, and it simplified it. Then we pooled our effort, too. We pooled information from farm advisors with that of the farm management specialist and me.

That's being continued, or at least in the San Joaquin Valley it's being continued. It's really helpful to people who were just starting out, who had no previous experience and needed some basis to do something.

*See Appendix I: Bibliography, items #1670 and #1684.

**In the Overland Monthly, December, 1981.

The interest in varieties continues, just because they're different. What we tried to do was to put together information of viticultural interest on those varieties in terms of production, in terms of cluster size, in terms of maturity, and particular problems in the vineyard. And I think these were, yes, quite useful to growers, because some of the varieties wre very new to them.

Those were very stimulating.

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Kasimatis: The other research interest I had was in nutrition fertilization of grape vines. I published a number of papers with Pete [Lewis Peter] Christensen on correcting zinc deficiency, and using potassium sprays on vines. We published an Extension publication with color photographs--I don't know if that's in the bibliography, or not--it's the standard; it was rather handsomely done. The cover was in black and white, so it's become known among growers as the black book. But there are some excellent color pictures of symptoms of excesses and deficiencies in the grape vines. That was the first time it was done in California. We've gotten a lot of play on that.*

Grape Varieties: Changing Interests

Teiser: When people started new vineyards, did they ask you for advice on varieties?

Kasimatis: Oh, surely, yes.

Teiser: What did you do? Did you refer them first to work done by Amerine and Winkler?

Kasimatis: Yes. We were very fortunate at that time to have that vast amount of information on the suitability of grape varieties to the different grape regions, et cetera, that they had done,

*Lewis Peter Christensen, A.N. Kasimatis, and F.L. Jensen, Grape Vine Nutrition and Fertilization in the San Joaquin Valley, Division of Agricultural Sciences, University of California, 1978

Kasimatis: because here was, really, in a major sense, the first application of that information on a large scale. Except that it didn't turn out that that was a useful enough guide, because the wineries became the focal point. It was not necessarily what would grow there, but what they were willing to buy.

Kasimatis: because here was, really, in a major sense, the first application of that information on a large scale. Except that it didn't turn out that that was a useful enough guide, because the wineries became the focal point. It was not necessarily what would grow there, but what they were willing to buy.

So really, when people began talking about varieties we would always have to say, "Well, you would have to go talk to the winery now about what you're going to plant, because there's no use planting an obscure variety if there's no winery demand for it." Right now, anyone who would plant without having a winery contract, or some firm outlet for the grapes would be foolish. But you see, particularly in the early seventies, the demand for grapes was so strong that they could plant them and they didn't worry about the demand., It was there. Now it's so much more selective.

Teiser: In your essay, "Grape Varieties," in the UC Press Book of California Wine, you pointed out the changes in interest in varieties: how varieties go up and down in popularity. You must have seen many.

Kasimatis: Oh, yes. Well, I think Merlot is a good example that came into considerable amount of interest in the early seventies and then that faded dramatically. Because in the Central Coast where it was widely planted, it was not very productive at all because of climatic conditions; so that acreage was all grafted over.

Merlot has emerged now as a variety on its own rather than as a blending variety--not that it isn't used for blending, but that's not its principal role at all. It's Merlot on its own feet now that is emerging as, I think, a very important California wine. That would be a good example of a role of a variety that has really changed.

Other examples would, of course, be Pinot noir. That went entirely into red wine production at one time, and it was really the French champagne interest that saved that variety for many growers. Because Pinot noir, for the most part, has not been that sucessful as a red wine; it's only in very recent years that people have seriously made some red wines of Pinot noir more along the lines of what they expected to make.

Chardonnay is another one. I think Amerine and Winkler evaluated that primarily as a very cool region grape, and it's planted much more widely than that. And, of course, Sauvignon blanc was a variety that, historically in California, was only found in the Livermore Valley, because Wetmore introduced it

Kasimatis: there primarily for sauterne production, and that interest declined to almost nothing. The variety was revived, and now it's overplanted. [laughs]

Teiser: Petite Sirah has changed place too, hasn't it?

Kasimatis: Well, it was long recognized in the North Coast as an important variety, but primarily as a blending wine because of its heavy body and deep color, and so on. So it was a workhorse variety. It even went into some port productions. Joe [Joseph, Jr.] Concannon fostered that as a varietal, and it has found some place, but disappointingly so; I think it deserves a lot more merit than that. There was a fair amount of acreage planted in northern San Joaquin Valley, and now that variety is on its last legs. It produced well enough, and the wines, I think, are quite interesting wines now, but there just seems to be no market for them now. So the Petite Sirah in the San Joaquin Valley is gone, or virtually all gone now. And, as I say, that's a fairly recent introduction, but growers can't sell it.

Teiser: Alicante Bouschet, that was popular during Prohibition, has had at least one defender recently.

Kasimatis: Yes. [laughs] Maybe only one.

Teiser: Angelo Papagni makes a pretty good wine out of it.

Kasimatis: He does, he does. But he admits that he is a booster of that variety, and it isn't shared by others. I think it had its place in the history of California wine industry, but there's no particular interest for it now.

In the San Joaquin Valley, until the seventies, there really wasn't much available for varietal red wine production. Carignane was widely grown, but it went into burgundy, I guess. Zinfandels at one time were planted even down as far as south as Bakersfield, but they were mostly grown in the northern part of the San Joaquin Valley, to a large extent in Lodi. Much of those went into port production. It was the introduction in the seventies of the Ruby Cabernet and Barbera that gave some basis for red table wine in San Joaquin Valley.

Teiser: I was reading in your essay about Barbera.

Kasimatis: Well, it had a small role. I think people like Louis Martini had a Barbera that came out of Sonoma County, and there were small productions here and there. But it never achieved any recognition until the seventies, when it was widely planted. And it's still a very important variety, because it has good acidity and has good color under those warm conditions.

Teiser: Ruby Cabernet brings up the varieties that were developed by Dr. Olmo. Are there others that are now of real importance?

Kasimatis: Not really. His latest introduction was Symphony, you know. Symphony , which was released in 1981, is a cross of Grenache gris and Muscat of Alexandria. It was introduced as a variety for Muscat flavored wine but lacking the bitterness of dry Muscat wines. I understand there are about a hundred acres or so planted in Sonoma County where one winery has really latched on to it and has several variations, levels of sweetness, that they call by different musical names, Rhapsody and so on. But I would say it's still an unrecognized variety as far as the consuming public is concerned.

Teiser: What of Emerald Riesling?

Kasimatis: That's in virtual obscurity now.

Teiser: I wonder why?

Kasimatis: Well, the primary use has been by Paul Masson in their Emerald Dry, but the variety has some inherent problems in the winery; it tends to brown quite readily, so it takes special handling, and the must is very pulpy and it's difficult to handle. I don't think there's any future for it. The Paul Masson people learned how to handle the variety, and it took some very special techniques. I guess basically the wine is not that distinctive. It was a proprietary wine, it was not a varietal wine. Dr. Olmo introduced Helena at the same time he introduced Calzin, and that hardly got off the shelf at all.

He has two or three white varieties that may be released in the next year or so that came out of some extensive testing in the Lodi area. I don't know which particular ones he has, but there's something taking place now, so we may see some new varieties come out of that program.

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Pinot Noir, Gamay Beaujolais, and Napa Gamay

[Interview 2: February 23, 1987]

Teiser: Yesterday we were discussing how reputations of various grape varieties rise and fall and you mentioned Pinot noir, but you didn't go far into it. I wondered if you could discuss Pinot noir from your observation over the years.

Kasimatis: I think Pinot noir in California has always been a very elusive variety from the standpoint of attaining the kind of quality comparable to that in Burgundy. Typical California Pinot noirs for many years were fruity, but lacking in color, and nowhere approaching the depth of the Burgundies.

Teiser: Why do you think that is?

Kasimatis: I think in part that Pinot noir was too widely planted in California. The sites were not selective enough. They were planted in general in the Napa Valley, for instance, and it comes out now that even in the Napa Valley there are favored locations, notably the cooler ones--in Carneros district as an example. I think concurrently with that there's been a greater dedication to make Pinot Noir. When I say dedication I mean some people have specialized in producing that style of wine so that their interests have been much more intense; they've worked harder at it.

Another possibility is that in much of the Pinot noir that was planted in the early days the vines were not clean. They had virus diseases, notably leaf roll, which would have affected both sugar development and color development; so that could have been an inherent weakness in the planting material. It wasn't until around the fifties that leaf roll was recognized for what it is, and it wasn't until the program through the Foundation Plant Materials got going, which really means in the seventies, that we started getting clean material out. So I think there are a number of reasons why Pinot noir never lived up to the reputation that was expected of it.

Teiser: Did you have any part in separating the identity of the Napa Gamay clone?

Kasimatis: No, I was not involved. The separation was between the Gamay Beaujolais and Pinot noir.

Teiser: Not the Napa Gamay?

Kasimatis: The Napa Gamay came into play there because of the BATF ruling that allowed people to use Napa Gamay grapes and to label their wine Gamay Beaujolais. No, I was not directly involved, that was Harold Olmo.

Teiser: Did it have practical implications then?

Kasimatis: Well, to some wineries it did, because they had a label of Gamay Beaujolais and they were using the variety that we call Napa Gamay in it, so they had some interest to protect in that dispute. It's pretty well all shaken down now; the variety that we call Napa Gamay--which, of course, is not the correct name for it*--it's fallen considerably in interest now and there's not very much of it around.

Teiser: Some winemakers are very loyal to Pinot noir.

Kasimatis: They've done some interesting things with Pinot noir in Oregon. They've done very well with Pinot noir there and that, I think, has added stimulus too.

Teiser: It is interesting that a neighboring state should stimulate California interest that way.

Kasimatis: Particularly because the nucleus of those people are Californians, they're "refugees" [laughs] who went to Oregon because of the climate but also because of the cost of land. These were for the most part younger people who didn't have a lot of capital so that they were able to get a start under those conditions, where it would have been extremely difficult in California. So there's a tie between Oregon and California with this common heritage there and they still look to California in many ways.

There were people like Charles Coury, who studied here at Davis, who was looking for the perfect climate. He decided that it wasn't in California and that's presumably why he went to Oregon, and I think for financial reasons, too. The climate there is distinctly different from California and much more similar to Burgundy than California is. I think that makes an interesting point: it doesn't all begin and start in California.

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* It is Valdiguie. A. N. K.

Soil as a Factor in Wine Quality

Teiser: What about the soil; let me go back to that old, old argument--

Kasimatis: I think the role of soil is an interesting one, and unfortunately one that's never been researched in California. Amerine and Winkler in their studies emphasized the effect of climate and the relationship of variety which, of course, is a very strong factor. But, while they did research it, they downplayed the role of soil on the basis that the grapevine is very adaptable and grows on a wide range of soils.

The big argument is: what does the soil contribute? In France, for example, people there state that the soil has a direct contribution to the flavor of the wine, and that's where the big argument is. Actually, I think part of it is misinterpretation, that when the French say terroir they don't mean soil literally, they really mean the vine environment including the soil and climate.

I think it is a fact that soil has a major part in contributing, but it contributes to vine growth; and it's those factors of vine growth that influence wine quality. For instance, if you plant, lets say Sauvignon blanc, which is an inherently vigorous variety, on a very deep, fertile soil along the Napa river, you will get almost gigantic vines in terms of growth. We know now from our understanding of what happens inside that canopy that fruit grown in that microclimate, chances are, is not going to be very favorable in terms of quality, that it's going to be likely very herbacious and very strong. The point is, I don't think that's a contribution of the soil itself; it's an indirect influence of the soil in influencing growth and then the nature of the canopy. So it's not an easy subject to handle. But I would tend to minimize a direct contribution of the soil in terms of flavor; its effect is on the vine itself and the growth that results.

Teiser: That's interesting.

Kasimatis: To pursue that a little bit further, if we recognize that hillside grapes--and I use that loosely in terms of the Napa valley, for instance; but, typically, hillside vineyards were non-irrigated and on more shallow soils--the quality of those grapes was never in dispute. Wineries like those in general, and they pay higher prices for them. In contrast, there are vineyards on the floor of the valley, on these deep, fertile soils, varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon, that the wineries found out rather quickly did not have the potential for making

Kasimatis: good wine quality. And that's recognized in the price. There were Cabernet grapes in Napa Valley that sold for a hundred dollars a ton last year. Well, they were obviously distressed grapes, and I don't know the particulars of them, but those vineyards are very much down-graded.

So Cabernet Sauvignon in Napa is not just one variety. Where it's grown makes a tremendous difference. And the difference is not just climate, it's how favorable the soil environment is. It makes a big difference. Part of it is soil depth, part of it is availablilty of moisture. Fertility per se, I think is a very small part of it.

Teiser: In the light of history--Hillgard was mainly a soil man; I'm surprised no tradition has followed.

Kasimatis: But I think growers had stronger feelings about sites. If you look in the Napa valley again, until the seventies there were sites that were on these fertile grounds near the river that the old timers avoided in planting grapes. These are largely in pasture and other uses. Part of the reason they avoid it is because of frost. Hillside locations would provide air drainage that these low-lying locations wouldn't. But in the big expansion of the wine industry in the seventies, because of the use of overhead sprinklers for frost protection, growers planted on these bottom lands, if you will, that had been avoided by the old timers. Some of those have been successful but not all of them have been successful because it's not good grape grounds, to put it in grower language. And I think it's partly the recognition that growing a great big vine is not conducive to grape quality.

Growers and the Cooperative Extension

Teiser: To go on to some other things that I have listed here, were there other growers throughout the state later whom you recall particularly--do you call them cooperators?

Kasimatis: Oh, yes. Quite a long list I guess, but I can think of the Wentes in Livermore and in Salinas Valley as being very cooperative with our work. I can think of, in Paso Robles, Herman Schwartz; he cooperated with us on trellis work in his vineyards there. I can think of Christian Brothers, who were very cooperative; Kundes in Mendocino County; certainly Bob Steinhauer of Beringers; down in Lodi, Carl Mettler and Jeryl Fry.

Teiser: Were these people to whom you could take problems and ask them to work with you? And did the problems originate with you or with them?

Kasimatis: Well, it could go either way. In some cases, it was problems that they had, so it was most appropriate to work on those locations. And there are cases where we took things to them, because they had a suitable location and so on to try different things.

Teiser: In general, I suppose people who work with you have to be willing to give up something, give up vines or wine or--

Kasimatis: Oh, sure, but it's a matter of mutual interest. An example: there's one line of research that I have continued on the control of Eutypa dieback, and we have some trials going; one is in Clarksburg and the other is in Lodi. The one in Clarksburg is with Dave Wilson and in Lodi with Joe Cotta. These are growers of Chenin blanc who have had problems with this disease and I went to them with their cooperation, because we wanted to initiate a trial on young vineyards, before there was any evidence of disease, and we developed a program of timed pruning and fungicide spraying.

We had different combinations of early and late pruning, and with and without a protective fungicide. The purpose of the experiment was to start some vineyards out with a protective program right from the very beginning and to contrast that, so it was improtant to get into young vineyards. So here were two growers who were of a cooperative nature and were willing to work with us on it. We've done that work now for what's going on seven years, and we're just beginning to get some results of that now because the disease is showing up. But it was, again, a matter of mutual interest in the problem and the fact that they had the right locations in terms of these young vineyards coming along, so they were ideal for our research.

Teiser: Have you had any of the fallout from the controversy about large wineries and large companies getting preferential treatment by university researchers?

Kasimatis: I guess we've always heard that, but really, the people who get the most help from Cooperative Extension are the people who ask for it, primarilly typically progressive growers. Often this is related to size, but not necessarily so. The people that need help most very often are people who don't ask for help, they don't ask questions, perhaps they don't know the right question to ask.

Kasimatis: I guess the other factor is that these progressive people are more willing to be innovators and to try things, so that you have something to work with. Its discouraging to go out to a grower, whatever size he is, and offer advice which he doesn't follow so you don't accomplish anything. If it's a new idea and, in contrast, you go to someone who is innovative and will put that into practice and make a success of it then obviously, not only from a standpoint of personal satisfaction but from the standpoint of getting acceptance, why, it makes sense to work with people who are willing to help you try things.

Teiser: I wonder if, as the education level of growers advances, they come to the Extension more readily.

Kasimatis: I think that's true, but it's also true that they are also more self-reliant, too. And also, there are alternative sources of information, too--I mean in the private sector, in terms of consultants, or directly from suppliers, and so on. So they're not limited in where they can look for information. Cooperative Extension is set up on county-by-county basis, and at one time growers looked for information within that county pretty much, but that's no longer true. They will call anyone or go anywhere to get the kind of information that they need. And many of the larger growers have airplanes, so they fly here and there to meetings, or they pick up the telephone. They're not limited by what's available locally. They will look for it whereever--and I wouldn't just limit that to California, either; it could be other states or even other countries. I think that's been a very marked change that I have seen, just in the approach of the growers.

Special Programs and Wine Grape Day

Teiser: I think Dr. Amerine told me that you had conducted an annual meeting here of county agents.

Kasimatis: We call them farm advisors. They're known as county agents in most other states.

Teiser: Was this something you initiated?

Kasimatis: Well, this was a typical program for specialists; that is, we would have meetings with farm advisors, often at Davis but not limited to Davis. Part of the meeting was training and sharing of information; that is, sharing among ourselves and with the people in the department, so that many of the speakers on these programs were department people speaking of progress in their

Kasimatis: research and farm advisors reporting results they had obtained in the county. It was a training/sharing type of a meeting that we would have on an annual basis, yes.

Teiser: Did you organize--

Kasimatis: Yes, I was the instigator, put it together.

Teiser: You mentioned to me that you had asked Marvin Shanken to be a speaker at Wine Grape Day. Did you organize Wine Grape Day?

Kasimatis: Yes. I started that in 1976.

Teiser: Was that the first Wine Grape Day?

Kasimatis: The first one. That was my baby.

Teiser: How did you happen to decide to do that?

Kasimatis: Actually, I guess the initial thought came from the California Association of Winegrape Growers when Ralph Bunje was the founding manager, and we got together and kicked around this idea.

There had been a Grape Day at Davis that had started in the early fifties. This was put on by the department in conjunction with Hilton Richardson, my predecessor in the [Extension] job, and that was strictly a summertime operation; it was held out in a vineyard where growers were able to see some research in the field. So we had it out in the vineyards here; then we extended that and had a Grape Day program over at the Oakville Station. When I came up in '55, I took over that program and ran that for many years. Later on I started a Grape Day down in Kearny and Fred Jensen took that over when he started there. So we had a long history of Grape Days coming out of Davis, but these were all summertime events and field events.

The thing that was different about Wine Grape Day was that it was a winter meeting, an inside meeting. It wasn't in the field, so the approach was different. We soon found out, and soon developed a philosophy, that the greatest weakness in the growers' knowledge was in marketing and economics. So while we featured viticultural topics, we tried to bring in speakers from out of state and so on who could address the various problems in the area of marketing and economics.

In many counties they have a winter program, some of them call them Grape Days or Grape Institutes or seminars, and they feature viticultural practices primarily, so we didn't try to "compete" with them but to offer something different. I think we did [offer something different], because we could bring in

Kasimatis: people from the outside like [Peter] Sichel and Harry Tiegsly and Marvin Shanken, people that the county people typically wouldn't be able to provide.

Teiser: Did you relate more closely with the actual wine-making industry?

Kasimatis: Yes. In contrast to the county programs which are focused to growers, at Wine Grape Day we attempted to bring winery people as well as growers, and I think we've been quite successful in that. There's no beginning or end, one just phases into the other. That was another one of our goals: to bring those two groups together.

Work as a Consultant

Teiser: On what date did you formally retire from the Extension work?

Kasimatis: Thirtieth of December, 1984.

Teiser: And then you became a consultant working on, it sounds as if, many of the same problems that you worked on before.

Kasimatis: Yes, the general nature was much the same. The big difference is that I work with so many fewer people and on a continuing basis. I have clients that I see quite regularly, and some that I see when they need me; but its a much smaller group, much more limited geographically (and that's just the way it turned out).

I guess I turned to consulting as soon as I retired, because I wasn't ready to quit working, and I was still as interested in viticulture as I ever was so I didn't want to give it up. And I've been pleased that it's worked out very well for me. It's not a full time activity by any means, but I am doing more than I expected to do and I'm enjoying it.

Teiser: I suppose it gives you a kind of freedom that you didn't have before.

Kasimatis: Oh, yes. I can say no now if I please, and I do. I don't have office hours to keep, and I don't get the phone calls that I used to get from whereever, I guess it always used to be--

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Teiser: You said that it used to be disconcerting--

Kasimatis: Yes. Well, to have people ask you a question about something that you haven't even thought about for quite a while--

Teiser: Especially to have them right at your feet--

Kasimatis: Exactly--and then the next five minutes, something a hundred and eighty degrees in the opposite direction. I don't miss that. I'll never forget, one time in the office there I had someone with me, and the phone rang--the phones are all direct line here--and someone else came and knocked on the door and wanted to know if I was busy. [laughs]

Foundation Plant Material Service

Teiser: I wanted to ask you about your activities in connection with the Foundation Plant Material Service.

Kasimatis: I've always felt close to that. I came here right at the very beginnings of that program and I fostered the program because it was the way to avoid these very serious virus diseases. I've been closely allied with that program from the very beginning and went through some of the hard times of growth, and have been able to see some of the real progress being made.

I think it's made a tremendous difference in California viticulture; as a result we have vineyards that are healthy, much more uniform in growth and development. We haven't gotten rid of virus diseases. They're still widely found and they're still being propagated unfortunately. But it's been a very viable program not only for California, but it came at a time of our leadership throughout the world, so it's had an influence on world-wide viticulture.

And, of course, it's a continuing type of program, because part of the goal of Foundation Plant Material Service is not only to index the material, but also to introduce material. There will never be an end of varieties or clones of varieties that may have some promise in California that need to be tested here, but we don't want to test them if they're not free of these serious diseases, so they have to go through this quarantine and indexing program.

I think it's been a tremendous impact. In the initial phases of it, the start was made with certain indicators (by Doctors [William B.] Hewitt and [Austin C.] Goheen), and it soon

Kasimatis: proved that some of the indicators were not the most sensitive and some infected materials slipped through. In fact, the program was almost lost because of that, but it survived. The industry, you know, through the Wine Advisory Board, donated funds that started that program. The first manager was Dr.[Curtis J.] Alley, and there were times when he struggled to get his paycheck from month to month, so it was a pretty hard go.

I would say that the real breakthrough came in the late sixties, early seventies, with heat therapy that enabled the pathologists to isolate the clean material for which they had no good sources previously. Thermal therapy was an important step in developing clean material. It's also been a subject of controversy that the therapy results in changes in wine quality or grapevine morphology, but these are more questions rather than based on any facts that I know of.

Teiser: Where physically does this Foundation Plant Material Service exist?

Kasimatis: It's here on campus. It has a foundation vineyard from which growers and nurserymen can buy registered stock to establish their own mother blocks or increase blocks. This program was set up under regulations of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, so the regulatory part of the program is handled by the State Department. They do the annual inspections, and they handle the tags and the certification part of it, but the nuclear stock comes from Davis out of Pathology and their indexing program. The first concept of this type of program was actually fostered by Dr. Olmo, but it was Dr. Hewitt who came along and actually was the one that started the present program that we have.

Teiser: Does it pretty well pay for itself now?

Kasimatis: Sort of. It's about at break even stage now, I think. It actually generated some excess funds during the early seventies, because with this heat therapy program they went into a greenhouse propagation set-up and actually developed plants from green cuttings. They developed a system. It was a volunteer royalty system, if you want to call it that, and for each propagating unit they received a few pennies. During the seventies this amounted to quite a bit of money, so there's still some surplus that's carried over from that time. But right now it barely pays for itself. [stops to talk to someone]

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Raisins

Teiser: Would you go over your work with the Raisin Advisory Board.

Kasimatis: With the California Raisin Advisory Board, I was involved on their research committee, where we met annually to review progress of research that they supported. In addition, I did research work with farm advisors in Fresno and Madera Counties on the relationship of raisin quality to raisin maturity. In this we used the air stream sorter that had been developed some years ago by Charles Fisher and had gathered dust on the shelves, and showed this to be a useful tool in relating in an objective way the quality of well-matured raisins expressed as a percentage. This tool supplanted the use of the so-called "can test" by the Sun Maid growers. They were the only ones who were using any kind of a quality test up until that time. Now it's a standard instrument in the industry as a means of objectively grading the percentage of well-matured raisins.

Teiser: It actually sorts them out by air stream?

Kasimatis: Yes. The raisins drop into a stream of air at a constant temperature and, depending on their internal density, they either are carried over or are dropped into this air stream. The heavy ones, obviously, drop into the air stream's opposing force; the light ones are blown over. It's actually a principle that's used mainly by the raisin packers, but done on a much smaller scale and under very controlled conditions.

Wine Institute Activities

Teiser: You have worked with the Wine Institute?

Kasimatis: Well, through their Viticultural Research Committee. It operated very similarly to the California Raisin Advisory Board. Some projects were jointly supported. The Viticultural Research Committee administered funds initiated through the Wine Advisory Board to support viticultural and enological research. This was at a time when there were no other similar agencies that were funding research on the university level. That continued for a number of years up until the demise of Wine Advisory Board, and then it was continued for a couple more years by Wine Institute on their own and then it's finally been dropped.

Kasimatis: I also received funds from that body to support research that I was doing with Lider and Kliewer, on trellising and training vines at the Oakville Station. We received support from them to do work on the control of Eutypa dieback as well. At that time the Wine Institute sponsored the Technical Advisory Committee meetings, and these were an important means of exchange of research information between the industry--except in the seventies they became so popular that they almost got out of hand. The Wine Institute discontinued them because they just couldn't handle the number of the people who were intrested. They reconstituted the technical advisory committee back to what it started, and limited attendance to the techncial people in the industry. It had become a forum, and, as I say, it just got completely out of hand.

Teiser: Now it's gone into WITS, The Wine Industry Technical Symposium.

Kasimatis: Yes, it's gone into WITS, that's right.

Teiser: And that's a little different.

Kasimatis: I think the idea is the same, but yes, a different presentation. The TAC was replaced or almost entirely limited to researchers or people in the industry. I think the topics are broader now under WITS.

Teiser: They're getting, I think, into more merchandising, too.

Kasimatis: Yes, that's right, into the marketing aspects.

The A. S. E. V.

Teiser: Your work with the American Society for Enology and Viticulture--

Kasimatis: Yes, well, I've been a member for thirty some years, but I also served as a director--

Teiser: You must have been one of the original members almost?

Kasimatis: No. Well, within a few years, but I wasn't a member at the very beginning. I served as a director; I served as secretary-treasurer; I served as associate editor for the journal, and on the editorial review board. Also, at the annual meetings I served as a chairman of the audio/visual committee, and I was session chairman for any number of times there.

Teiser: And you're continuing activity?

Kasimatis: Yes, yes. I'm continuing activity. I'll be participating in the forum coming up at the annual meeting in June in Anaheim.

Teiser: Are you satisfied with the way that organization operates and have you any thoughts on what it should do that it's not doing?

Kasimatis: Well, I think the activities have expanded beyond the annual meeting and the journal. There have been the addition of workshops on specific topics as adjuncts to the meetings, and during the meetings in the last couple of years we've had a number of quite good symposia or forums to concentrate on certain topics. The one coming up in June, as an example, is the relationship between vineyard practices and wine quality; it's a broad topic, but it's one that should interest both the enologists and the viticulturists.

Vineyard Changes, 1948 - 1987

Teiser: Would you comment upon the major changes you have noticed in the wine grape vineyards over the years you have been involved?

Kasimatis: There have been any number of changes in the viticulture, varieties, of course, being the number one thing in terms of the wine industry. Especially in the San Joaquin Valley we grow varieties now suitable for making table wine that were not grown before. We have clean stock to work with so we get much more uniform, more productive vineyards.

Irrigation practice has improved drastically, not only with the introduction of overhead sprinklers, but with drip irrigation and with scheduling so that there is a much greater understanding of the value and need for irrigation. We are gradually dispelling the old notion that irrigated grapes make sour wine; there's still that that hangs on.

There's been a tremendous amount of activity in pest management. This has come out of necessity--that it's obvious that the chemical solution after World War II wasonly a short lived one and it's a matter of management now, that we use chemicals with very specific objectives and sometimes only as a last resort. We look to many other means of living with these pests and we have to adopt a philosophy of tolerance, that we cannot eradicate these pests, normally wouldn't want to eradicate, but we need to keep their levels below that in which they can create any economic loss. We have to define economic

Kasimatis: loss, of course, for comparing, but mere presence of insects is no longer a reason for attempting control.

I'm sure the growers would say that we've invented new problems along the way, but really, these are only recognition of old problems such as virus diseases which we don't control but which we avoid by planting clean vines. We've recognized Eutypa dieback, which I'm sure was here for years. It's not a new problem but was there all the time.

I think there also have been some great strides made in the recognition of the role of viticultural practices in wine quality. The understanding of the role the vine microclimate has on quality is a story that's being unfolded now, and I think it's going to have a tremendous impact on the quality of wines that are produced in the future. We've placed greater emphasis on all viticultural practices because in some way they have some influence; and we see wineries much more active in the field during the growing season, being concerned about level of crop, about practices that might influence the ultimate quality of wines. I think we've built some very strong relationships between wineries and growers both working with the same goal--that is, to produce quality wine products.

Teiser: I think you indicated that early when you came into the industry every grape had a home, there was no surplus--

Kasimatis: Yes. That was true for many, many years--that all the grapes had a home at some winery at some price. But we saw in 1982, I think for the first time in a major way, where grapes were unwanted and were left in the field, and that was almost unheard of. Because in previous years when dessert wines were the dominant product of the wine industry those grapes would have gone into the distilleries either as high-proof or fortifying brandy and kept over for another year. Wineries now are much more discerning on what they buy because they're market oriented. They're not speculating.

In the last almost fifteen years we haven't had disasters to the grape crop that we've experienced before in terms of frost and in terms of heat damage. And we're less likely to have those severe shifts because we have greater means of protecting our vines from these disasters. So some of the old-time philosophy of speculating that you could store grapes as wine because there's a chance of these heavy frosts or whatever, has just diminished considerably. Wineries are much more in tune with current marketings rather than speculating on some shortage of crop in the next year because of a natural disaster.

Teiser: I suppose the banks had a part in that.

Kasimatis: I'm sure they had.

Teiser: You've implied the greatest need now--

Kasimatis: Well, I could emphasize that. In terms of the growers, I think what they like is the stability of outlets now, not only in terms of price, but the fact that their grapes are wanted. I guess that would be the best thing that I could think of, to bring stability to the industry.

Transcriber: Brenda Stine
Final Typists: Jaynelle Bell, Debbie Lighthall

TAPE GUIDE -- Amandus Nicholas Kasimatis

Interview 1: February 22, 1987	1
tape 1, side A	1
tape 1, side B	12
tape 2, side A	17
tape 2, side B	26
Interview 2: February 23, 1987	30
tape 3, side A	30
tape 3, side B	38
tape 4, side A [side B not recorded]	40

APPENDIX I - From "Bibliography of Publications by the Faculty, Staff, and Students of the University of California 1876-1980 on Grapes, Wines and Related Subjects," by Maynard A. Amerine and Herman J. Phaff, in University of California Publications in Catalogues and Bibliographies, Vol. II, The University of California Press, 1986.

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1645 *1957* Some factors influencing the development of water berries in Thompson Seedless grapes grown for table use. 49 lvs. M.S. thesis, Horticulture, UC Davis.

1646 *1958* Irrigation for grapes. Western Fruit Grower 12(4): 14-15.

1647 *1959* Cultural practices affecting the quality of raisins. Pp. 200-205 in Twenty Years of Raisin Research, 1949-1969. Fresno, Calif. Raisin Advisory Board.

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1649 *1959* (with C. Lynn) How to produce quality raisins. Berkeley, Calif. Agric. Exten. Serv. 18 pp.

1650 *1959* (with A. J. Winkler, K. Nelson, and J. Cook) Produce better grapes for better wines. Berkeley, Calif. Agric. Exten. Serv. Pamphlet. 16 pp.

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1659 *1966* New varieties pave the way for grape advance. West. Fruit Grower 20(3): 25-26.

1660 *1967* (with J. J. Kissler, J. V. Lider, C. D. Lynn, B. B. Burlingame, and E. A. Yeary) Economic review of the California grape industry. M-17. Berkeley, Calif. Agric. Exten. Serv. 32 pp.

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1671 *1974* (with J. J. Kissler) Responses of grape vines to shoot break-out following injury by spring frost. Amer. J. Enol. Vitic. 25: 17-20.

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1683 *1977* (with E. P. Vilas, Jr., F. H. Swanson, and P. P. Baranek) Relationship of soluble solids and berry weight to airstream grades of natural Thompson Seedless raisins. Amer. J. Enol. Vitic. 28: 8-15.

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1692 *1980* (with L. A. Lider, and W. M. Kliewer) Trellising and training practices on the influence of yield, fruit composition, and growth of Chenin blanc grapes. Proc. Symp. Grape Wine Centennial (UC Davis), 386-389.

Appendix II
Overseas Activities

1. During October - November 1972 invited by University of Chile to observe field problems, participate in seminars and offer counsel regarding programs in wine grape production. Program a part of a University of California - University of Chile cooperative scheme sponsored by Ford Foundation.

2. In March - April, 1973, invited to Australia to observe viticultural practices and consult with viticulturists and growers by Seppelt and Sons, Adelaide, South Australia in cooperation with the Departments of Agriculture of South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria.

3. Invited by the Oenological and Viticultural Research Institute, Stellenbach, South Africa, to participate in the International Symposium on "The Quality of the Vintage" held in Capetown in February 1977. In addition, was asked to study South African Viticulture during a two-week period. The symposium was sponsored by O. I. V. [L'Office International de la Vigne et du Vin], Paris.

4. Under the auspice of United States Information Agency, Washington, D.C., I was one of three American scientists to participate in a seminar, "Achievements in American Agriculture," held in Iasi, Romania on August 15 - 19, 1977. My colleagues represented areas in field crops and dairy breeding, and I covered viticulture.

5. During February 1978 I consulted with San Telmo, a private winery/vineyard venture in Mendoza, Argentina.

6. As a guest of the Barossa Cooperative Winery, Nuriootpa, South Australia, I delivered the principal address, "California Viticulture in the Eighties," on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of this grower organization on August 21, 1981. The viticultural areas of South Australia were visited as well as South Australian viticultural research centers.

7. From May 15 to October 15, 1983, sabbatical leave was taken to study cool-climate viticulture at the National Agricultural Research Institute (I.N.R.A.), Colma, France. I visited 22 viticultural research centers and schools in France, Germany, and Switzerland. Interest was focused on wine grape variety identification, berry-set failure, summer pruning practice, clonal studies, and wire trellising and training.

8. During July 1985, I joined a People-to-People viticulture program in the Soviet Union, Romania, and Bulgaria. The group of 26 was composed of California viticulturists/winemakers. The purpose was to study and exchange information on wine grape production.

INDEX -- Amandus N. Kasimatis

Agricultural Extension Service, passim
  titles, 10-11
Alley, Curtis J., 39
ambering, 20-21
American Society for Enology and Viticulture, 41-42
Amerine, Maynard A., 6, 14, 26-27, 32
apricots, 4
avocados, 2

Berg, Harold W., 14
Beringer, Vineyards, 33
Borrego Valley, 10
Botrytis, 20, 24
brandy, 11-12
Bunje, Ralph, 36
Burlingame, Burt, 25

California Association of Winegrape Growers, 36
California Grape Products, 3, 6
California Raisin Advisory Board, 40
Carter, Maurice, 23
Chavez, [Cesar], 9
Christensen, Lewis P., 26
Christian Brothers, 6, 33
citrus fruit, 2, 3, 4
Concannon, Joseph, Jr., 28
concentrates, 12-13
Cook, James A., 15
Cooperative Extension Service, 16, 34-35, and passim
costs, vineyard, 25-26
Cotta, Joe, 34
Coury, Charles, 31
Cruess, William V., 13-14

DDT, 5
"dead arm," 23-24
de Mattei, Bill, 6
Di Giorgio Fruit Corporation, 3-6, 7, 9-10
Di Giorgio, Joseph, 10
Di Giorgio, Joseph A., 4-5
Di Giorgio, Joseph S., 10
Di Giorgio, Robert, 10

Eutypa armeniacae, 22, 23-24
Eutypa dieback, 22, 23, 24, 34, 41, 43

fertilization, vine, 26
Ficklin, David, 8
Ficklin Vineyards, 8
Fisher, Charles, 40
Fry, Jerry, 33
Foundation Plant Materials Serivce, 30, 38-39

Giumarra brothers, 3, 7, 9
Goheen, Austin C., 38
Grape Day, 36
Guymon, James, 11

Harbor Winery, 7
Hartman, Hudson T., 2
Hewitt, William B., 38, 39
high-proof, 43
Hopland field station, 17
horticulture, passim

irrigation, 42

Jacob, Harry E., 2
Jensen, Fred, 36

Kern County, 3-11
Kearny field station, 17, 19, 36
Kliewer, W. Mark, 19, 41
Kovacevich, John J., 8
Kunde family, 33

Lanza, Horace O., 3-4, 6-7
leaf roll, 30
Lider, Lloyd, 15, 19, 41
Lyttle, Joe, 5

Martin Brothers, 7
Martini, Louis [M.], 28
Masson, Paul, Vineyards, 29
mechanized harvesting, 19-20
Merrill, Grant, 8
Mettler, Carl, 33
Moller, William J., 22

Nelson, Klayton E., 17
Nielsen, Uriel, 6
nutrition, vine, 26

Oakville field station, 16-17, 19, 36, 41
Oidium, 24
Olmo, Harold P., 8, 14, 17, 29, 31, 39
overseas activities, 45-46

Papagni, Angelo, 28
peaches, 4, 8
Perelli-Minetti, Antonio, 3, 4, 7, 9
Perelli-Minetti, [A. and Sons], 3-4
pest management, 42-43
Phylloxera, 18-19
plums, 4, 5, 8
pruning, 19, 21, 34

Quady, Andrew K., 11
Quady Winery, 8

Raisin Advisory Board, 40
raisins, 4, 20, 25, 40
Richardson, Hilton B., 11, 36
rootstocks, 18, 19

Santa Maria viticultural area, 6
Schwartz, Herman, 33
Shanken, Marvin, 36, 37
Shaulis, Nelson J., 19
Sichel, Peter 37
soil, 32-33
spacing, vineyard, 19-20
Steinhauer, Bob, 33
Stelling estate, 17
Swift, Ed, 5

table grapes, 3-4, 8, 9, 10, 19, 21, 25
thrips, western flower, 5
Tiegsly, Harry, 37
trellising, 19-21, 33

United Farm Workers, 9
University of California, Berkeley, 14
University of California, Davis, 2, 6, 11, 13-37 and passim
  Department of Viticulture and and Enology, 14
  non-degree students, 13
  Wickson Hall, 14
University of California field stations, 16-17
University of California, Los Angeles, 1-2

virus diseases, vine, 38-39, 43
viticulture, passim

water berries, 5, 17-18
Wilson, Dave, 34

Wine Advisory Board, 39, 40
Wine Grape Day, 36-37
Wine Industry Technical Symposium (WITS), 41
Wine Institute, 40-41
    Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), 41
    Viticultural Research Committee, 40
Winkler, Albert J., 2, 6, 14, 15, 19, 26-27, 32
Weaver, Robert J., 15
Wente family, 33

zinc deficiency, 26

Grapes mentioned in the interviews

Alicante Bouschet, 28
Almeria, 21
Barbera, 28
Cabernet Sauvignon, 6, 32-33
Calmeria, 21
Calzin, 29
Cardinal, 8
Carignane, 7, 28
Cataratto, 7
Chardonnay, 6, 19, 27
Chenin blanc, 12, 23, 34
Emerald Riesling, 29
Flame Seedless, 22
French Colombard, 12
Gamay Beaujolais, 30-31
Grenache, 23
Grenache gris, 29
Helena, 29
Inzolia, 7
Merlot, 27
Mission, 7
Muscat of Alexandria, 29
Napa Gamay, 30-31
Nebbiolo, 6-7
Palomino, 7
Perelli 101, 7
Petit Sirah, 28
Pinot noir, 19, 27, 30-31
Red Malaga, 8
Ribier, 8
Riesling, 6
Ruby Cabernet, 28, 29
Sauvignon blanc, 27-28, 32
Souzao, 8
Sylvaner, 6
Symphony, 29
Thompson Seedless, 8, 11, 12, 19
Tinta Cao, 8
Tinta Madeira, 8
Valdiguie, 31
Zinfandel, 28

Wines Mentioned in the interviews

Angelica, 7
Barbera, 28
Champagne, 27
Emerald Dry, 29
Mission del Sol, 7
Pinot Noir, 30
port, 7, 28
Rhapsody, 29

Ruth Teiser

Born in Portland, Oregon; came to the Bay Area in 1932 and has lived here ever since.
Stanford University, B.A., M.A. in English; further graduate work in Western history.
Newspaper and magazine writer in San Francisco since 1943, writing on local history and business and social life of the Bay Area.
Book reviewer for the San Francisco Chronicle, 1943-1974.
Co-author of Winemaking in California, a history, 1982.
An interviewer-editor in the Regional Oral History Office since 1965.